



Foreign Worker Survey 2014

Report on Findings

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1 Introduction

1.1 Objective and Scope of Survey

As part of the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) continued efforts to better understand the employment conditions and well-being of non-domestic foreign workers (FWs) in Singapore, the Ministry and Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) commissioned a Foreign Worker (FW) survey in 2014. This is the second time that the survey is conducted - the inaugural run was in 2011.¹

The scope of the survey covers:

- FWs' overall satisfaction with working in Singapore;
- FWs' experiences at various stages of the employment process;
- FWs' awareness of their responsibilities and responsibilities of their employers; and
- FWs' awareness of channels for redress and assistance.

For the purposes of this survey, FWs refer to non-domestic Work Permit (WP) and S Pass holders.²

1.2 Sampling Methodology

Fieldwork for the survey started in March 2014 and was completed in July 2014. The final report was based on a sample size of 4,000 FW respondents comprising 3,500 WP holders and 500 S Pass holders. The respondents were selected randomly and the sampling frame was designed to be generally representative of the FW population profile, for example, the sector in which the worker was employed.

1.3 Data Collection Methodology

The surveys were administered through face-to-face interviews in English or in the native language of the respondent. All respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and that only aggregated data would be reported.

¹ The 2011 report is available at: www.mom.gov.sg/Documents/statistics-publications/MOM-and-MWC-FW-survey.pdf. The topline interim findings report for the 2014 FW survey is available at: http://www.mom.gov.sg/Documents/statistics-publications/FW-Study-2014_ToplineInterimFindings.pdf.

² A Work Permit (WP) is generally issued to a semi-skilled or unskilled foreign worker, while an S Pass is issued to a mid-level skilled worker (e.g. technician) who earns a fixed monthly salary of at least \$2,200 to work in Singapore.

2 Overall Satisfaction Levels, Future Intentions and Recommendation of Singapore as a Place for Work

2.1 Satisfaction Levels of FWs

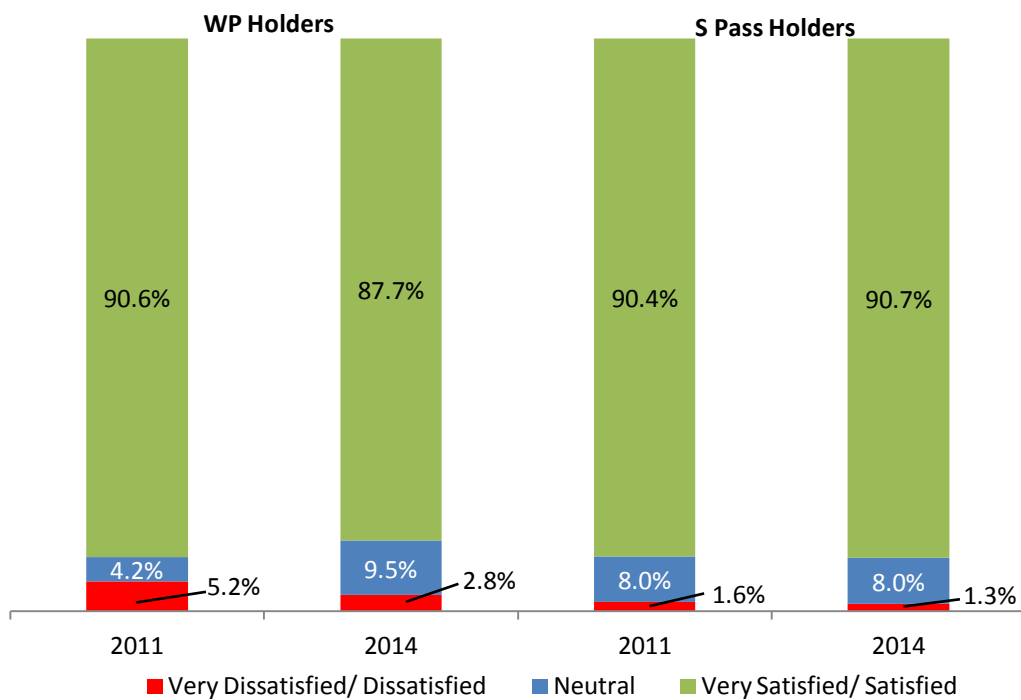
Generally, FWs expressed high levels of satisfaction with working in Singapore

2.1.1 There was no statistically significant change in satisfaction levels from 2011.³

2.1.2 On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “very satisfied”, about nine in 10 FWs (WP holders: 87.7% and S Pass holders: 90.7%) rated their overall satisfaction with working in Singapore at least a 4, i.e. satisfied.

2.1.3 2.8% of WP holders and 1.3% of S Pass holders rated their satisfaction level as “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”.

Currently, as a whole, how satisfied are you with working in Singapore?

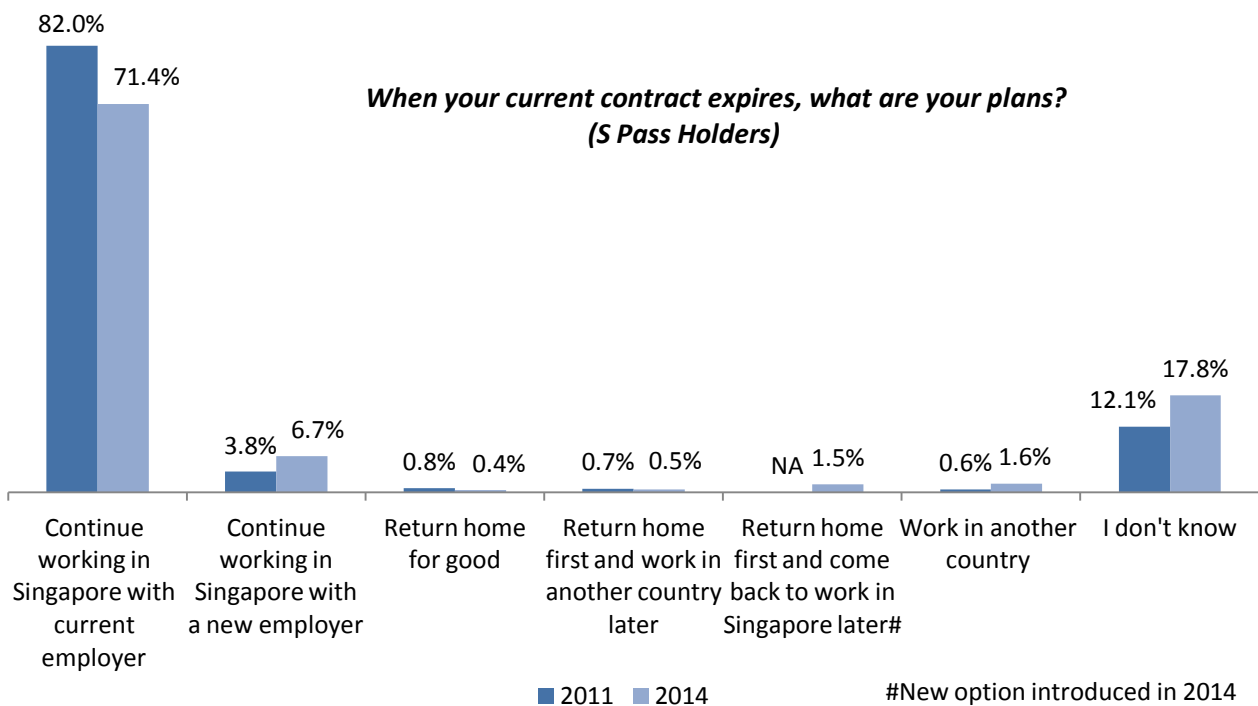
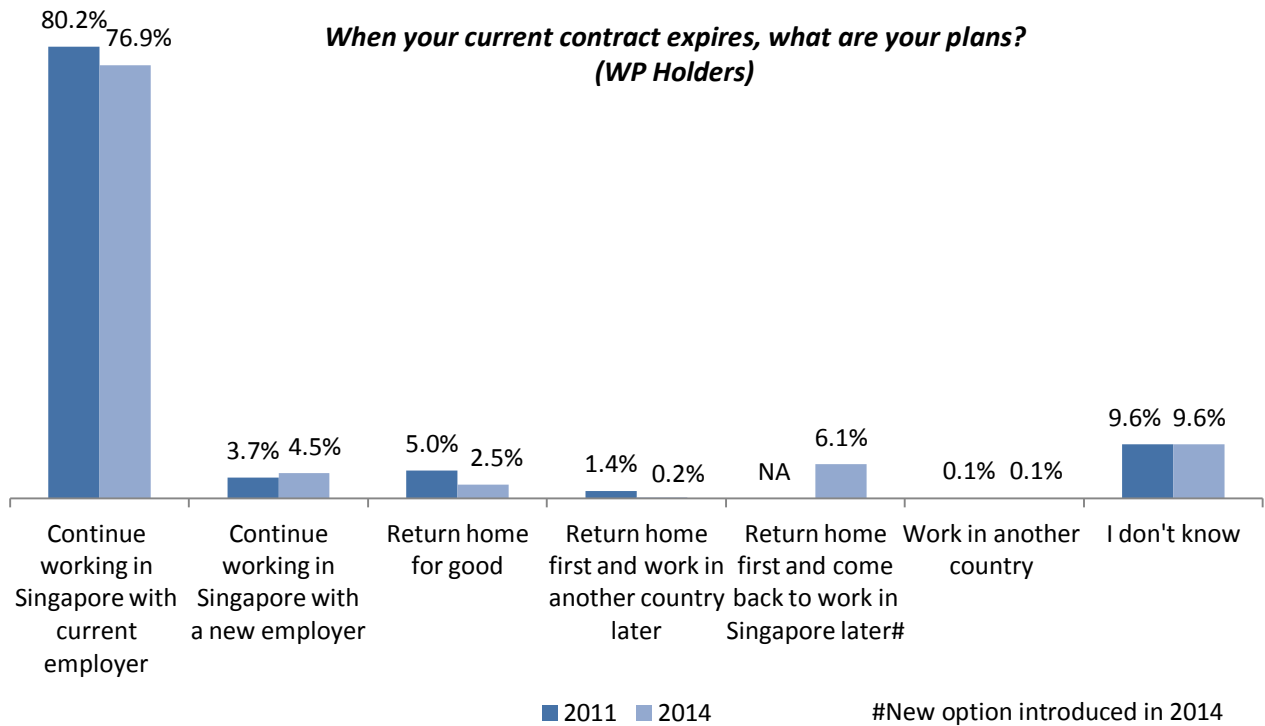


³ Where applicable, significance tests were conducted across the 2011 and 2014 survey runs. Where the difference is statistically significant, it would be denoted by an asterisk (*) in the graphs.

2.2 Future Intentions of FWs

A high proportion of FWs planned to continue working in Singapore

2.2.1 When asked about their plans after their current contract expires, more than seven in 10 FWs (WP holders: 76.9% and S Pass holders: 71.4%) said they planned to continue working in Singapore with their current employer. A small proportion (WP holders: 4.5% and S Pass holders: 6.7%) said they planned to continue working in Singapore with a new employer.



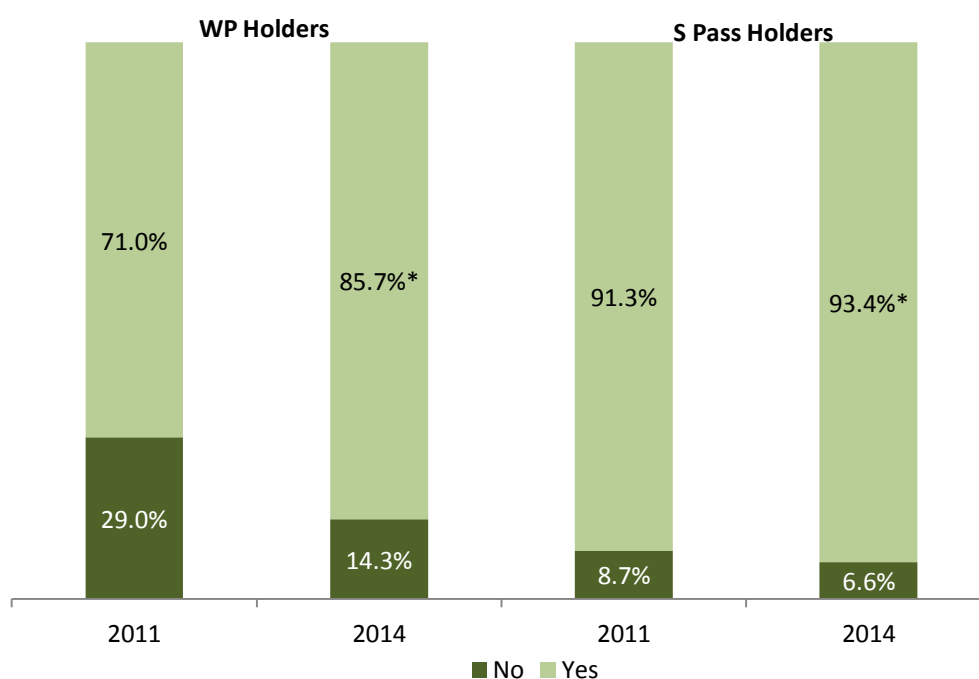
2.2.2 Among those who planned to work in another country in future, common reasons cited by FWs to do so were similarities in culture, higher pay and more rest days.

2.3 Recommending Singapore as a Place to Work

Compared to 2011, more FWs said they would recommend Singapore as a place to work

2.3.1 85.7% of WP holders and 93.4% of S Pass holders said that they would recommend Singapore to their friends and relatives as a place to work.

Would you recommend your friends and relatives to come to Singapore to work?



2.3.2 The key reasons cited by WP holders for recommending Singapore as a place to work were good pay (71.7%), good working conditions (44.3%) and a sense of security (35.4%). The key reasons cited by S Pass holders were good pay (71.8%), good working conditions (52.8%) and good living conditions (51.0%).

Top five reasons for recommending Singapore as a place to work (multiple options allowed)

Reasons most commonly cited	WP Holders		S Pass Holders	
	2011	2014	2011	2014
Good pay	61.5%	71.7%	69.2%	71.8%
Good working conditions	32.5%	44.3%	31.5%	52.8%
Sense of security	39.1%	35.4%	55.8%	39.1%
Good living conditions	36.0%	34.2%	45.8%	51.0%
Good prospects	52.8%	19.0%	33.3%	16.6%

2.3.3 Of the WP holders and S Pass holders who indicated that they would not recommend Singapore as a place to work, key reasons cited included agency fees, pay levels and working conditions.

Top five reasons for not recommending Singapore as a place to work (multiple options allowed)

Reasons most commonly cited	WP Holders		S Pass Holders	
	2011	2014	2011	2014
Expensive employment agency fees	24.3%	40.0%	23.6%	14.8%
Low pay	38%	32.6%	22%	8.2%
Poor working conditions	6.9%	12.8%	1.4%	6.6%
Poor living conditions	7.2%	12.4%	NA	0%
Poor prospects	12.6%	9.7%	8.8%	0%

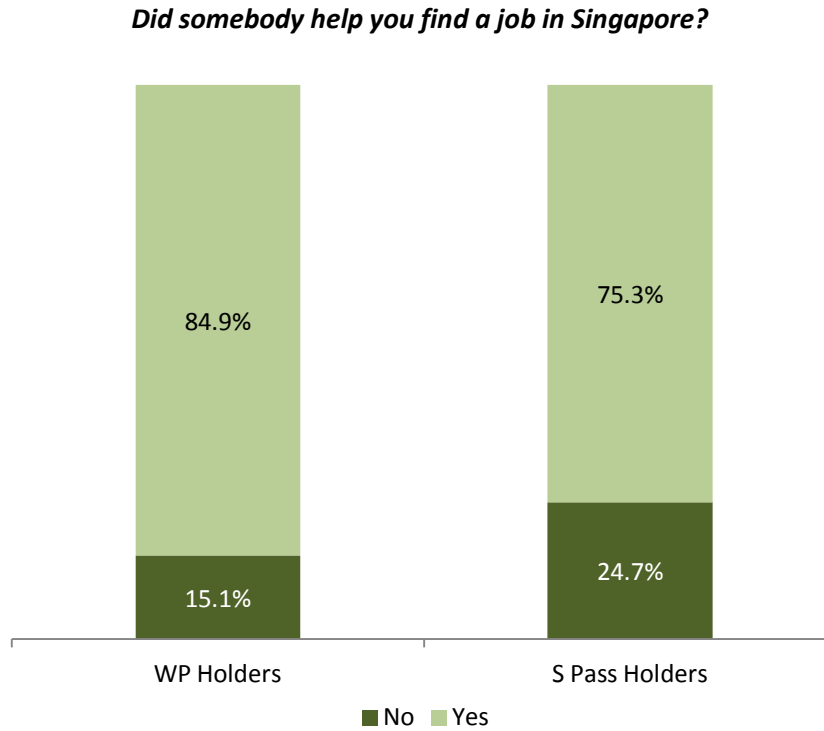
NA: Data not available

3 Pre-Employment Experiences

3.1 Source of Information for Job in Singapore

Excluding Malaysians⁴, most FWs found out about their current jobs through employment agencies in their home countries

3.1.1 Excluding Malaysians, more than seven in 10 FWs (WP holders: 84.9% and S Pass holders: 75.3%) indicated that they received help from other parties to secure a job in Singapore.



3.1.2 Of these, majority (WP holders: 79.8% and S Pass holders: 75.8%) indicated finding out about their jobs in Singapore through an employment agency (EA) in their home country.

Who helped you find a job in Singapore?

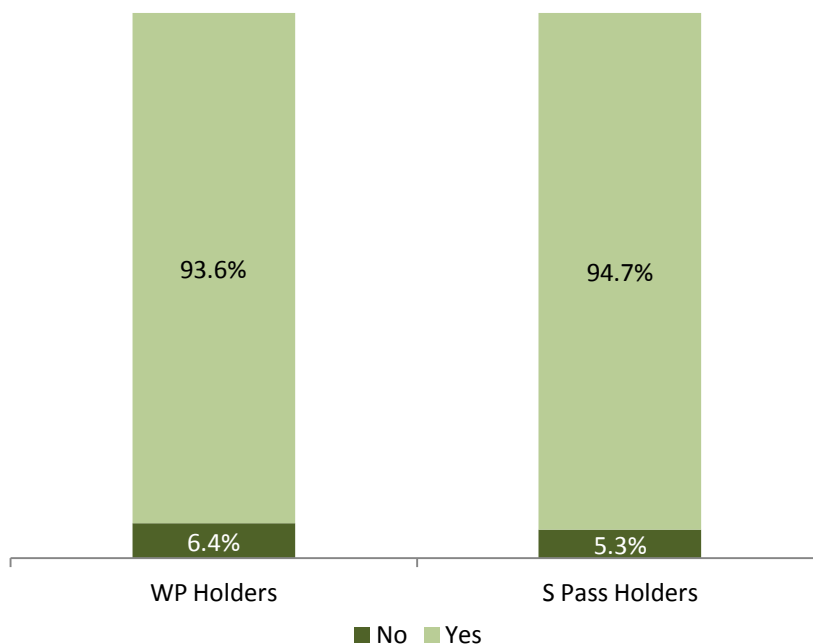
Source	WP Holders (excluding Malaysians)	S Pass Holders (excluding Malaysians)
Employment agent in home country	79.8%	75.8%
Employment agent in Singapore	11.9%	7.6%
Friend/relative in home country	4.0%	8.9%
Employer in Singapore	2.6%	0.9%
Friend/relative in Singapore	1.4%	5.2%
Village elder	0.1%	0.0%
Others	0.1%	1.5%

⁴ Malaysians have been excluded from the analysis as they are usually directly hired without intermediaries.

More than nine in 10 FWs indicated that their current working conditions were consistent with promises made by parties who helped them secure a job

3.1.3 Amongst FWs who received help from other parties to secure a job in Singapore, 93.6% of WP holders and 94.7% of S Pass holders indicated that their current working conditions were consistent with the initial promises made by the parties who helped them secure a job in Singapore.

When you started working in your current job, were the working conditions consistent with the promises which had been made to you?

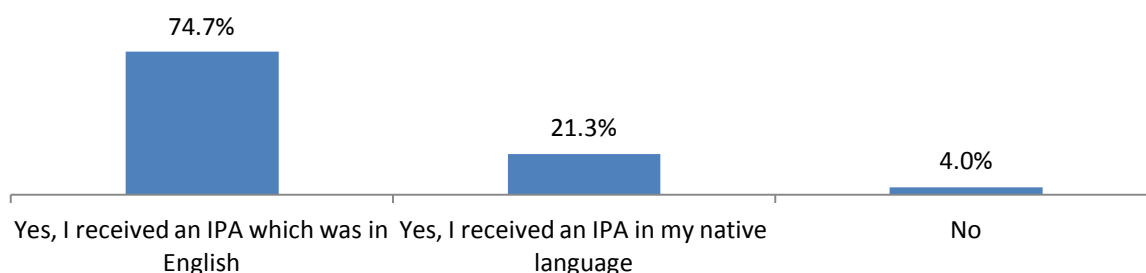


3.2 Receiving the In-Principle Approval (IPA) Letter⁵

Most WP holders received their IPA letters in English

3.2.1 96% of non-Malaysian WP holders received their IPA letters.⁶ 74.7% of them indicated they received their IPA letter in English, while 21.3% of them indicated they received their IPA in their native languages. 4.0% indicated that they did not receive their IPA letters at all.

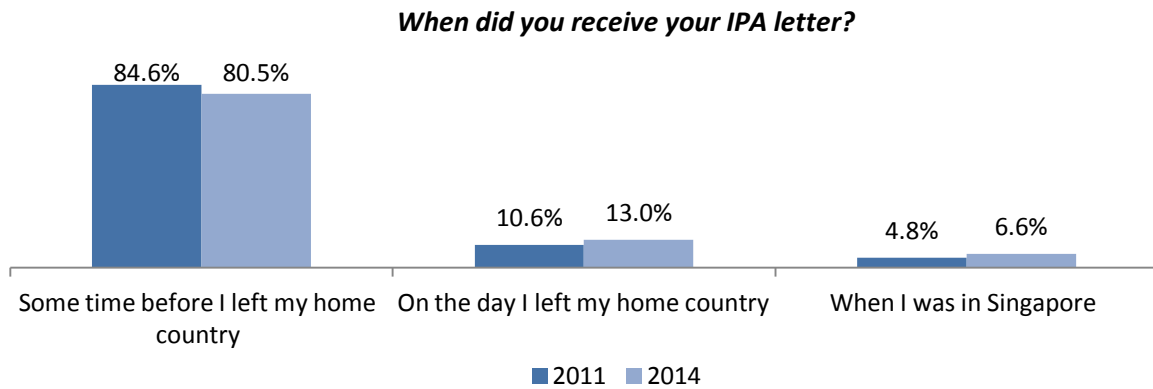
Did you receive your IPA letter?



⁵ An IPA letter is issued by the MOM's Work Pass Division upon a successful application of a Work Permit.

⁶ In the 2011 survey, 98.7% non-Malaysian WP holders indicated that they received their IPA letters.

3.2.2 Of those who did receive their IPA letters, 80.5% indicated that they had received it sometime before they left their home country, 13.0% had received it on the day they left their home country, and 6.6% had received the IPA letter only after they arrived in Singapore.

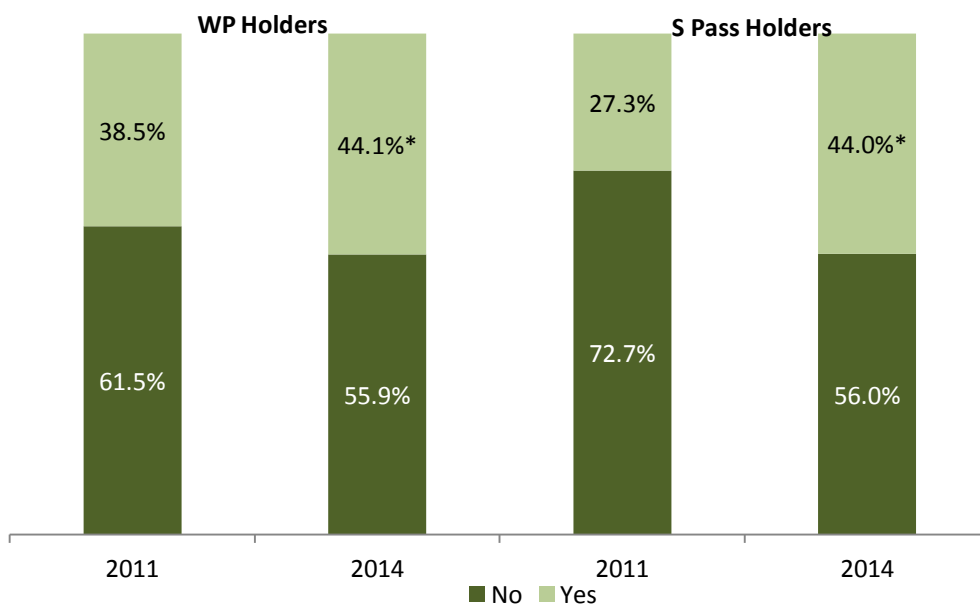


3.3 Provision of Training in Home Country

More FWs underwent training in their home country compared to 2011; trained mainly in job-related skills and safety at work

3.3.1 About 44% of WP and S Pass holders had undergone training in their home country before coming to work in Singapore. This is a statistically significant increase from 2011 where the proportion was about 39% and 27% of WP and S Pass holders respectively.

Did you go through any training in your home country before coming to work in Singapore?



3.3.2 The main areas of training were job-related skills (WP holders: 96.2% and S Pass holders: 97.1%) and safety at work (WP holders: 50% and S Pass holders: 59.8%). More than 90% were required to pass tests at the end of their training in respect to job-related skills and safety at work.

***What areas of training did you undergo in your home country?
Were you required to pass a test at the end of the training?***

Areas of training	WP Holders		S Pass Holders	
	% trained	% who were required to pass a test	% trained	% who were required to pass a test
Job-related skills	96.2%	95.0%	97.1%	92.7%
Safety at work	50.0%	95.0%	59.8%	94.3%
Culture and social norms in Singapore	14.9%	87.7%	5.1%	51.4%
Laws and regulations in Singapore	25.5%	64.8%	7.0%	37.2%
English language	21.0%	84.3%	8.9%	65.0%
Others (e.g. IT)	1.8%	82.9%	0.7%	0%

3.3.3 Before coming to Singapore to work, WP holders indicated that they spent a median duration of 60 days and \$1000 on training in their home country, while S Pass holders spent a median duration of 40 days and \$3000 on training in their home country.

3.4 Provision of Training in Singapore

FWs also attended training in Singapore; trained mainly in job-related skills and safety at work

3.4.1 80.5% and 73.2% of WP and S Pass holders respectively had undergone training in Singapore in 2014 compared to 82% and 63% in 2011. The main areas of training were in job-related skills (WP holders: 71.4% and S Pass holders: 53.5%) and safety at work (WP holders: 86.0% and S Pass holders: 78.4%). Most were required to pass tests at the end of their training in respect to job-related skills and safety at work.

***What areas of training did you undergo in Singapore?
Were you required to pass a test at the end of the training?***

Areas of training	WP Holders		S Pass Holders	
	% trained	% who were required to pass a test	% trained	% who were required to pass a test
Job-related skills	71.4%	94.7%	53.5%	83.0%
Safety at work	86.0%	94.4%	78.4%	89.9%
Culture and social norms in Singapore	13.3%	83.8%	6.9%	45.3%
Laws and regulations in Singapore	29.3%	60.9%	8.6%	51.2%
English language	18.1%	88.5%	8.1%	69.0%
Others (e.g. IT)	0.9%	82.9%	3.8%	88.1%

3.4.2 Both WP and S Pass holders spent an average of three days on training in Singapore which was provided to them free-of-charge.

4 FWs' Working Conditions and Experiences during Employment

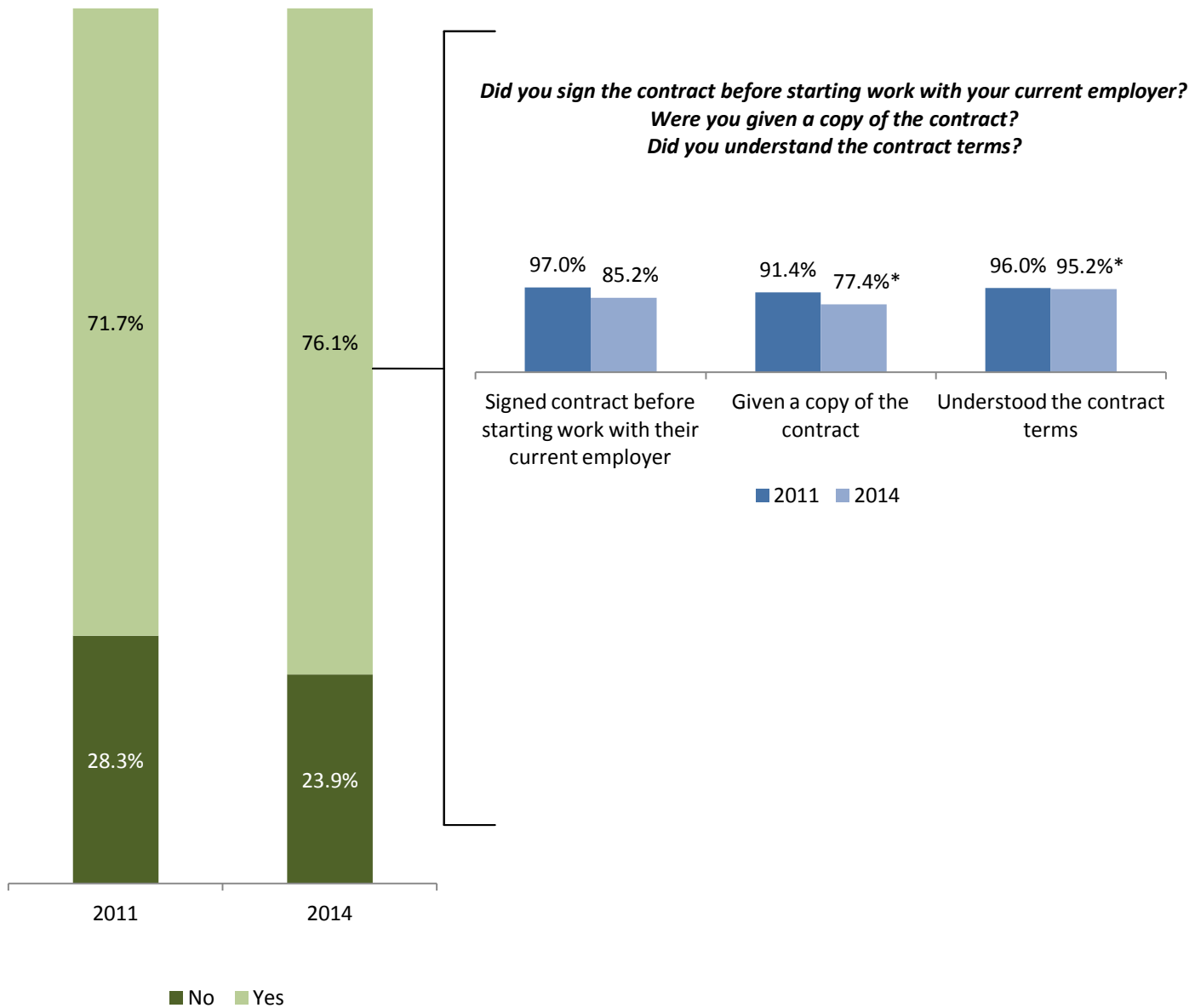
4.1 Written Employment Contract

The majority of FWs had a written employment contract and were given a copy of it

4.1.1 Similar to 2011, 76.1% indicated having a written employment contract with their current employer. Among those who had written contracts: (i) 85.2% had signed the contract after they had come to Singapore and before they had started work with their current employer; (ii) 77.4% were given a copy of the contract; and (iii) 95.2% understood the contract terms.

WP Holders

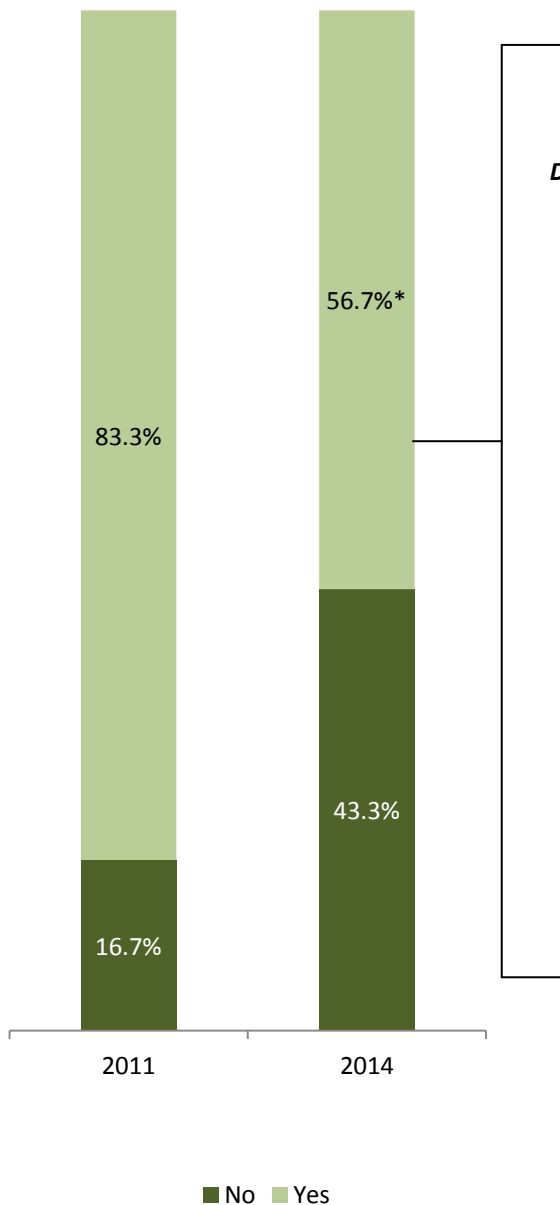
Do you have a written employment contract with your current employer?



4.1.2 56.7% of S Pass holders indicated having a written employment contract with their current employer. Among those who had written contracts: (i) 91.6% had signed the contract after they had come to Singapore and before they had started work with their current employer; (ii) 82.3% were given a copy of the contract; and (iii) almost all (99.1%) understood the contract terms.

S Pass Holders

Do you have a written employment contract with your current employer?



**Did you sign the contract before starting work with your current employer?
Were you given a copy of the contract?
Did you understand the contract terms?**



4.2 Work and Rest Hours

*WP holders indicated a higher median number of hours worked per day compared to S Pass holders
Most FWs had a meal break of a fixed duration during working hours*

- 4.2.1 Amongst WP holders surveyed, the median number of hours worked in a day was nine. 51.1% of the WP holders worked an average of more than eight hours a day. The median number of days worked per week was six.
- 4.2.2 For the S Pass holders surveyed, the median hours worked in a day was eight. 41.1% of the S Pass holders worked an average of more than eight hours a day. The median number of days worked per week was six.

How many hours do you work in a day? (median hours per day)

WP Holders		S Pass Holders	
2011	2014	2011	2014
10 hrs	9 hrs	8 hrs	8 hrs

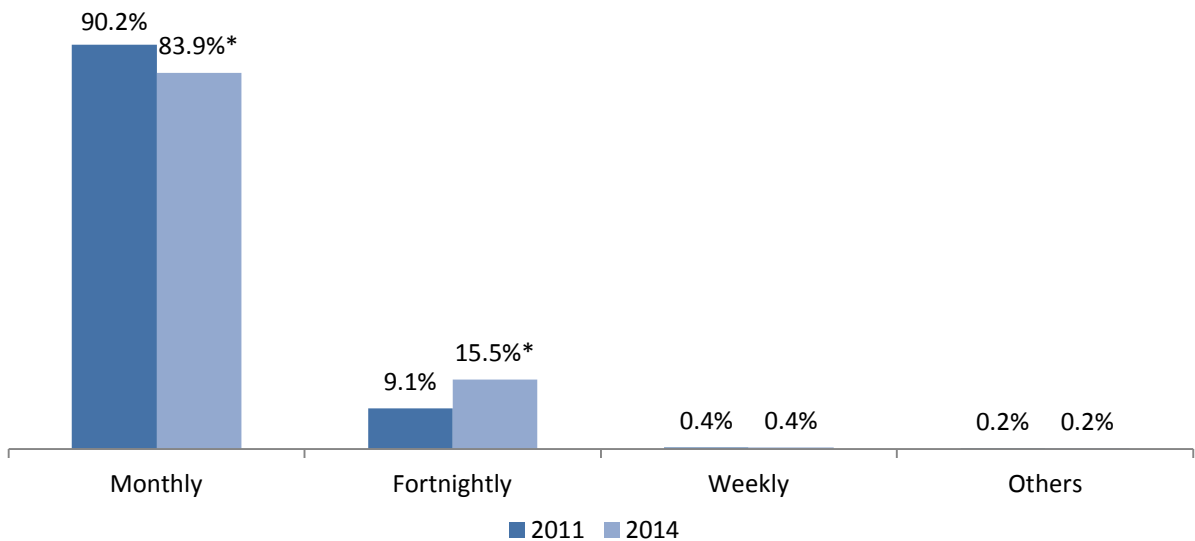
- 4.2.3 Similar to 2011, most WP holders (94.0%) and almost all S Pass holders (97.4%) indicated that they had a meal break of a fixed duration during working hours. The median period of time given for each meal break was one hour.

4.3 Frequency of Salary Payment

Most FWs received their salaries on a monthly or fortnightly basis

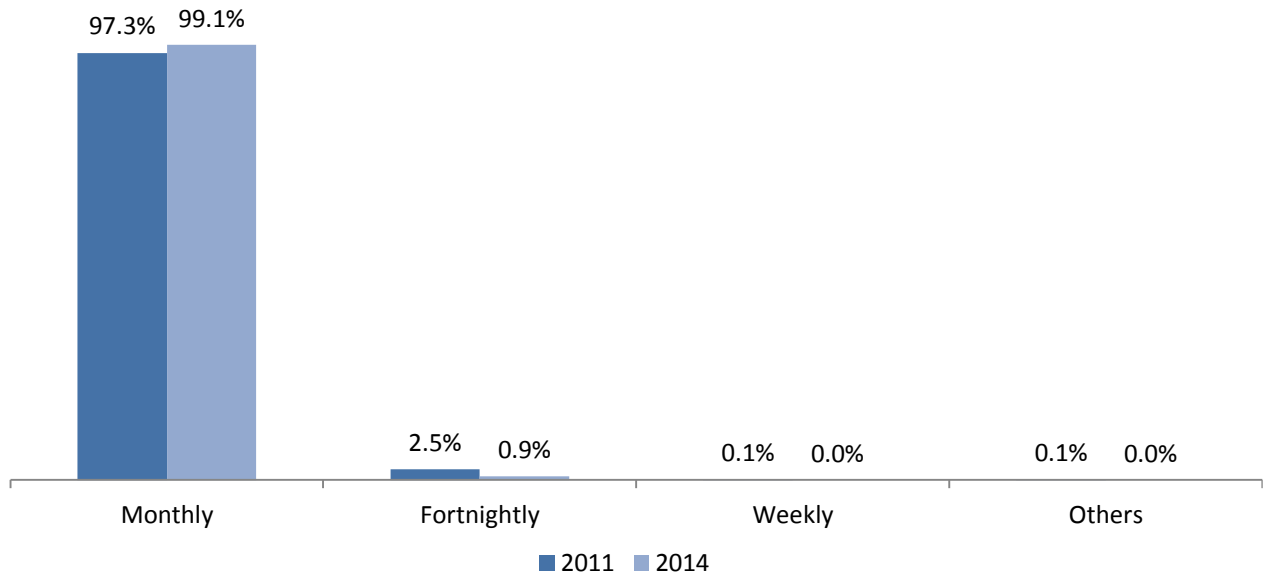
- 4.3.1 Fewer WP holders (83.9%) received their salaries on a monthly basis compared to 2011, with more being paid fortnightly.

**How often is your salary paid to you? (multiple options allowed in 2014)
(WP Holders)**



4.3.2 Almost all S Pass holders (99.1%) continued to receive their salaries on a monthly basis.

**How often is your salary paid to you? (multiple options allowed in 2014)
(S Pass Holders)**

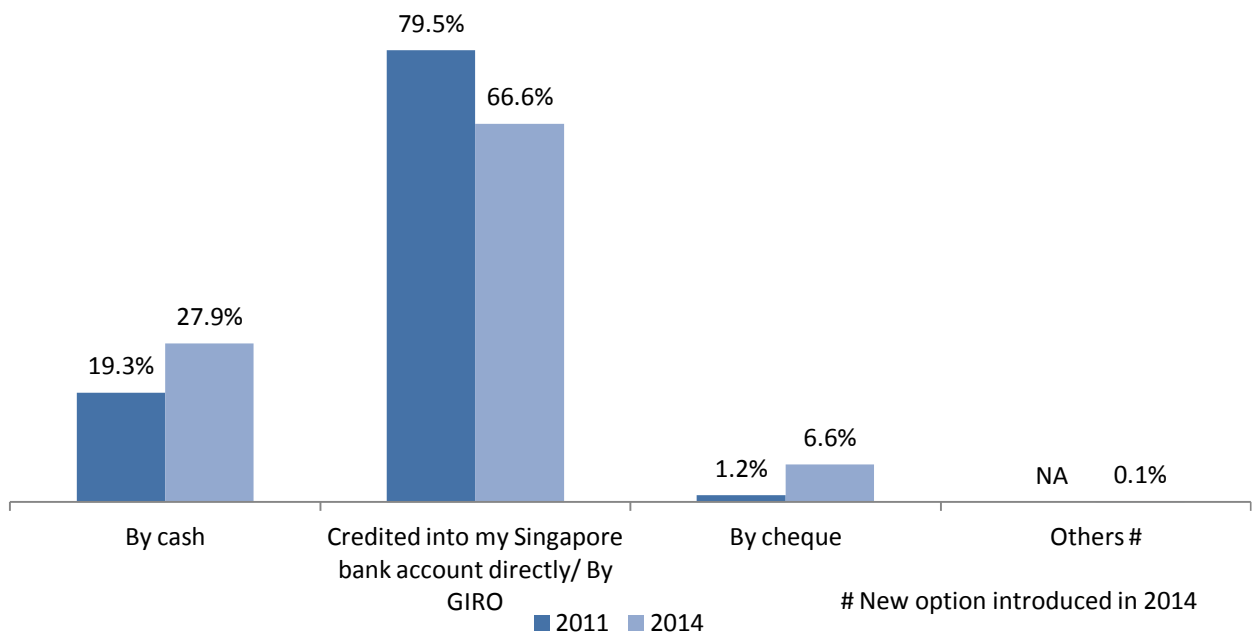


4.4 Mode of Salary Payment

The majority of FWs had their salaries credited into their Singapore bank account directly or via GIRO

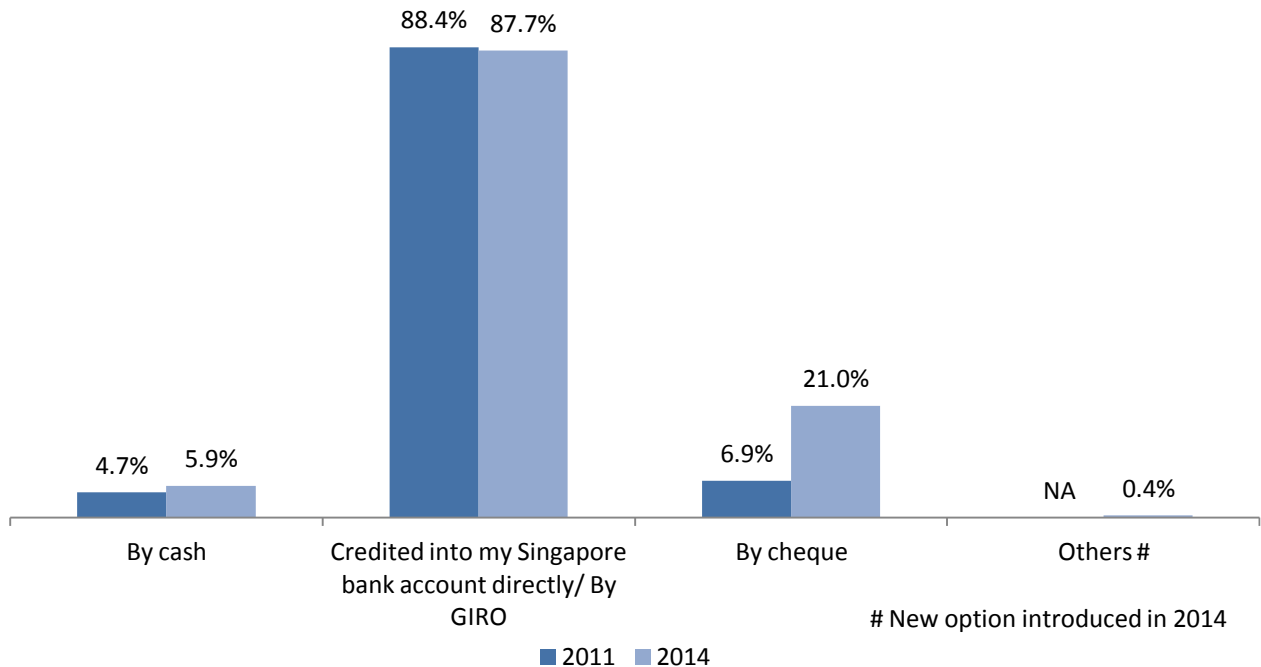
4.4.1 More than six in 10 WP holders (66.6%) indicated that their salaries were credited directly into their Singapore bank account or via GIRO.

**How does your employer pay you salary? (multiple options allowed in 2014)
(WP Holders)**



4.4.2 Close to nine in 10 S Pass holders (87.7%) indicated that their salaries were credited directly into their Singapore bank account or via GIRO.

**How does your employer pay you salary? (multiple options allowed in 2014)
(S Pass Holders)**



4.5 Salary Components

More than nine in 10 FWs were aware of the components of their monthly salary

4.5.1 93.6% of WP holders and 93.4% of S Pass holders were aware of the components of their monthly salary. Majority of FWs (WP holders: 76.8% and S Pass holders: 59.5%) indicated they had overtime payments as part of their monthly salary.

Please share with us the components of your monthly salary (multiple options allowed)

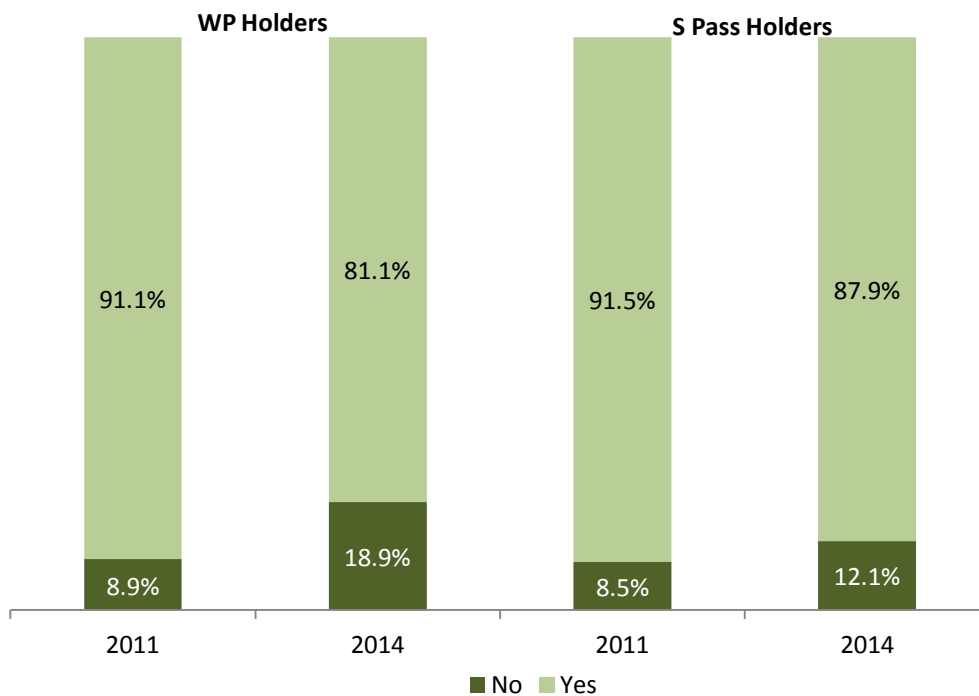
Components	WP Holders	S Pass Holders
Basic	100%	100%
Overtime	76.8%	59.5%
Housing	15.8%	5.5%
Transport	15.8%	4.9%
Other accommodation-related items (e.g. laundry, utilities)	10.9%	2.0%
Food	7.8%	2.0%
Being punctual during salary period	5.5%	3.4%
Others	4.9%	12.4%

4.6 Payslips

More than eight in 10 FWs saw a record of their salary payments and kept a physical record of their salary payments

4.6.1 81.1% of WP holders and 87.9% of S Pass holders saw a record of their salary payments and kept a physical record of their salary payments.

Does your employer let you see and keep a record of your salary payments?



4.6.2 Of the FWs who saw a record of their salary payments, 98.1% of WP holders and 95.6% of S Pass holders indicated that their records contained a breakdown of their salaries.

4.7 Salaries Owed by Employer

A very small proportion of foreign workers indicated having salaries owed by their employers at the time of the survey

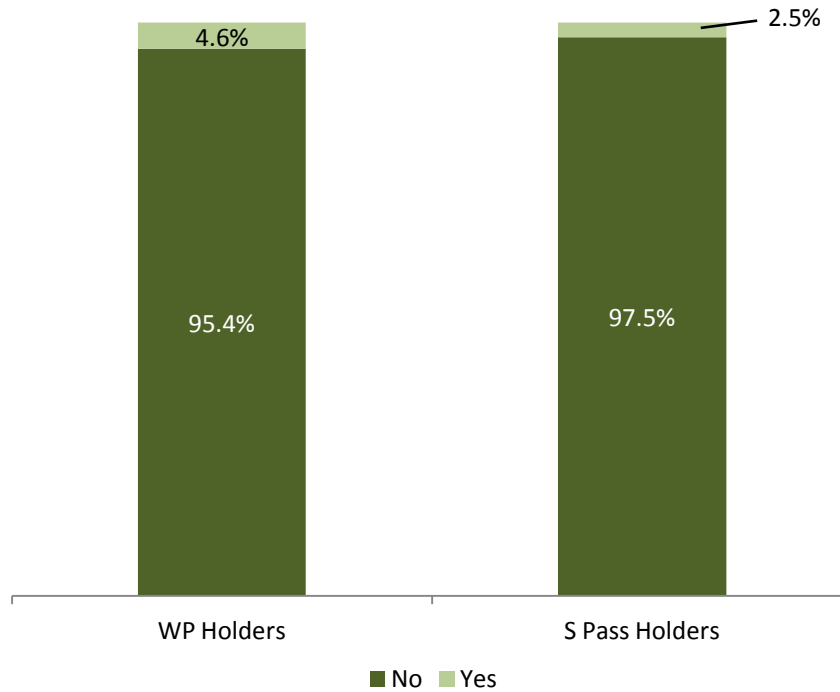
4.7.1 0.6% of WP holders and none of the S Pass holders, were owed salaries by their employers at the point of the survey.

4.8 Salary Deductions

Less than 5% of FWs had their salaries deducted in the past 12 months

4.8.1 4.6% of WP holders and 2.5% of S Pass holders had their salaries deducted by their employers at least once in the past 12 months.

In the past 12 months, has your current employer ever deducted your salary?

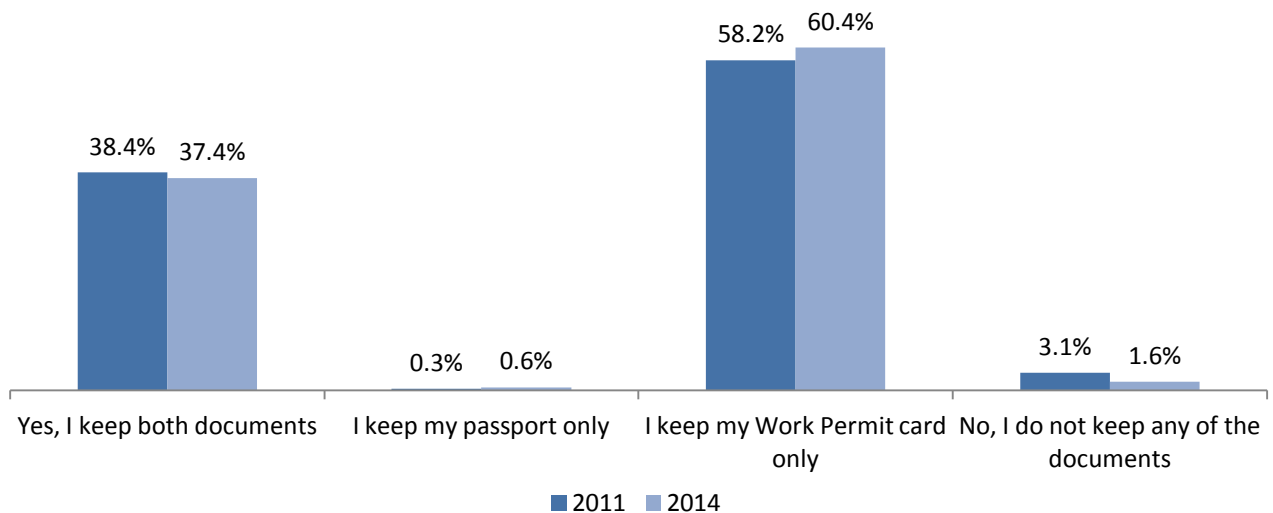


4.9 Keeping of Personal Documents

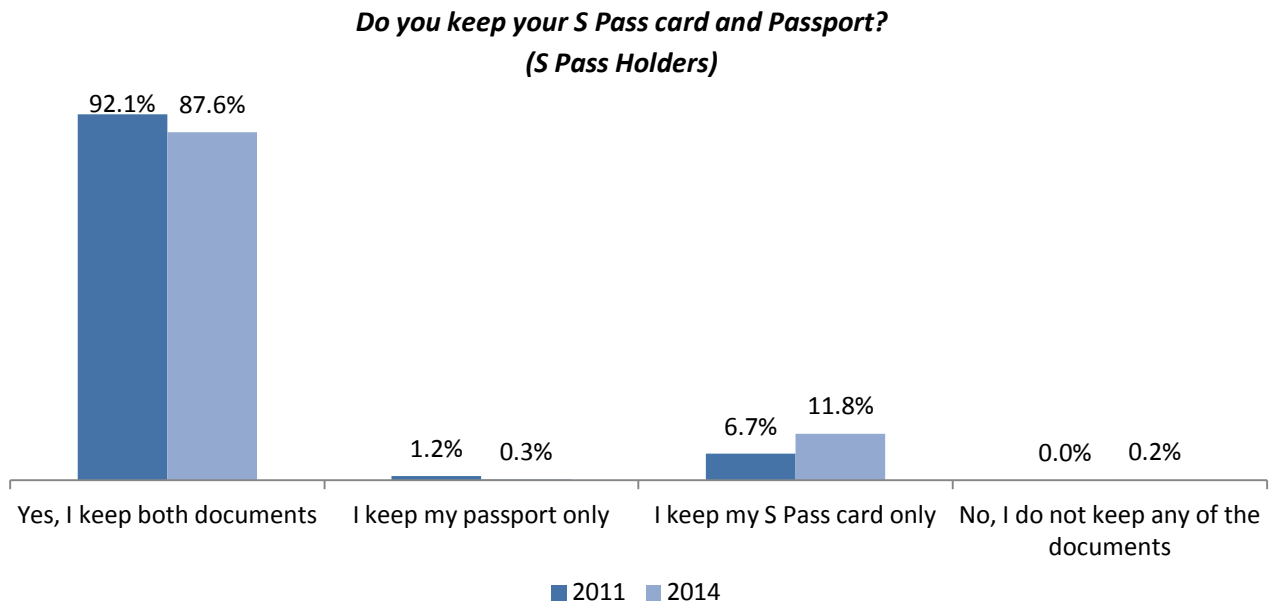
Almost all FWs whose documents were kept by employers received their documents upon request

4.9.1 About four in 10 (37.4%) WP holders kept both their WP cards and passports with them. Of the WP holders who had left at least one of these documents with their employers, 42.6% had requested for the documents to be returned to them. Almost all (95.8%) of these requests had been granted.

***Do you keep your Work Permit card and Passport?
(WP Holders)***



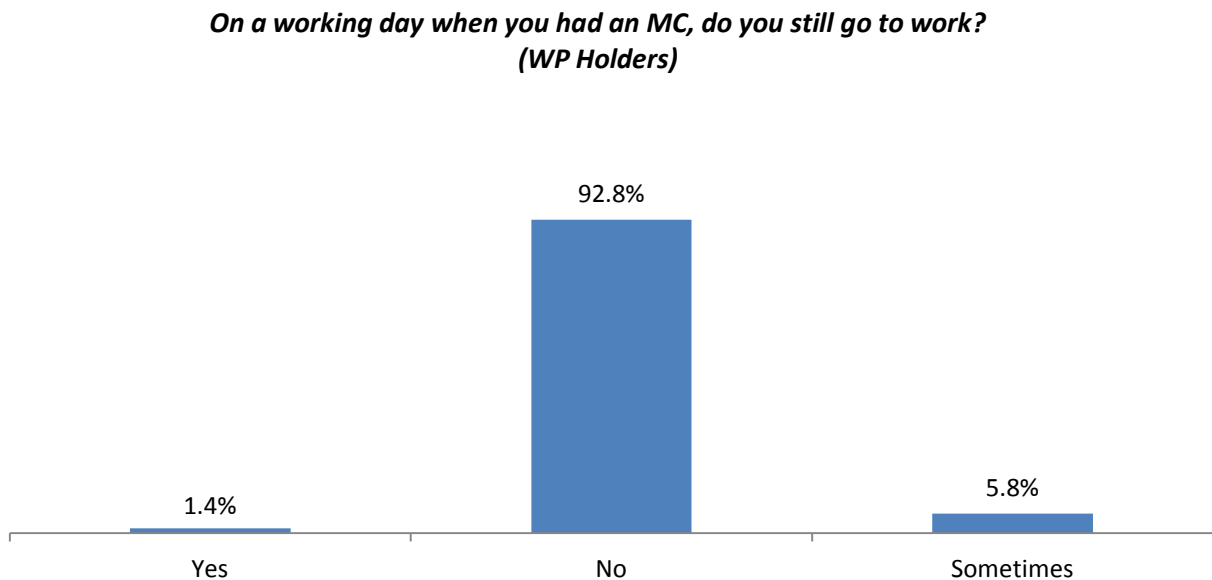
4.9.2 Close to nine in 10 (87.6%) S Pass holders kept both their S Pass cards and passports with them. Of the S Pass holders who had left at least one of these documents with their employers, 53.6% had requested for the documents to be returned to them. All received their documents upon request.



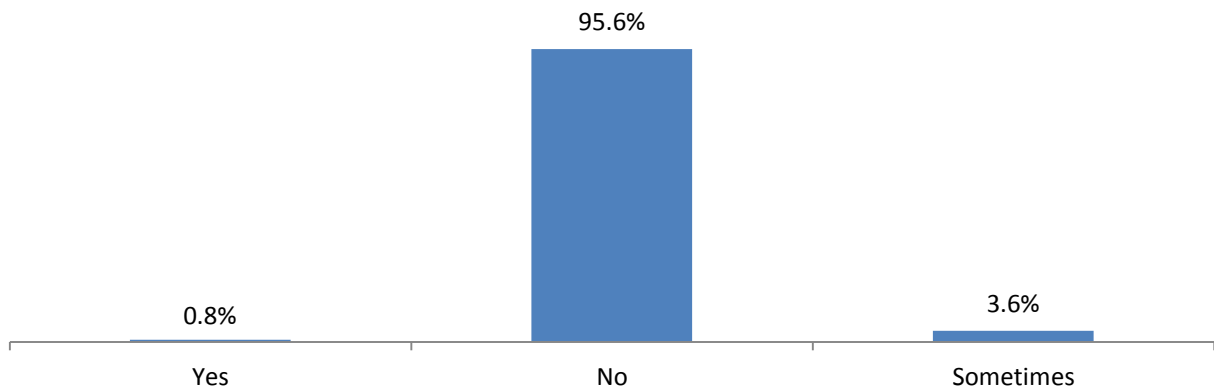
4.10 Working while having a Medical Certificate (MC) for Sickness

Almost all FWs did not work whilst having an MC and their salaries were not deducted as a result

4.10.1 92.8% of WP holders and 95.6% of S Pass holders did not go to work if they had an MC.

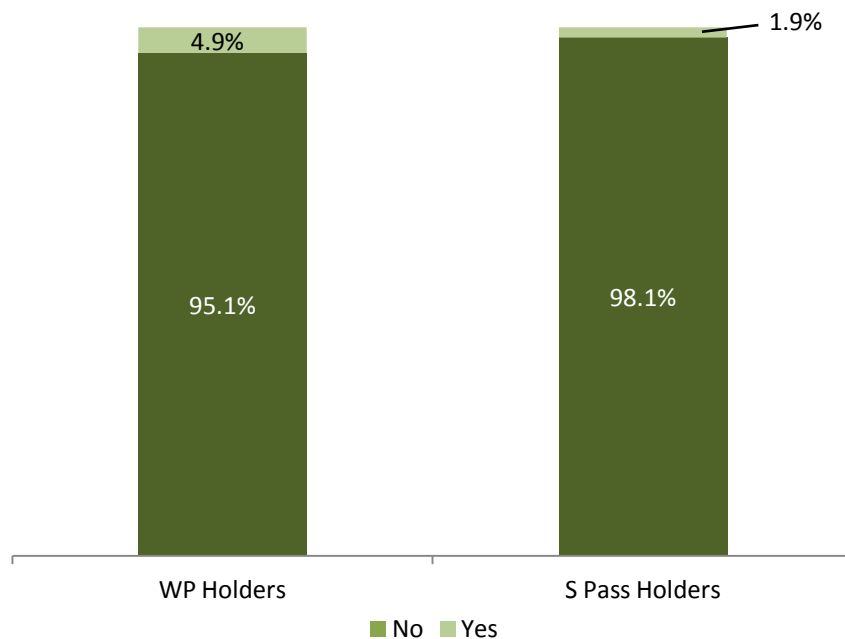


**On a working day when you had an MC, do you still go to work?
(S Pass Holders)**



4.10.2 Of the FWs who did not work if they have a MC for their sickness, almost all (WP holders: 95.1% and S Pass holders: 98.1%) indicated that their salaries were not deducted.

Did your employer deduct your salary because you did not go to work while on MC?



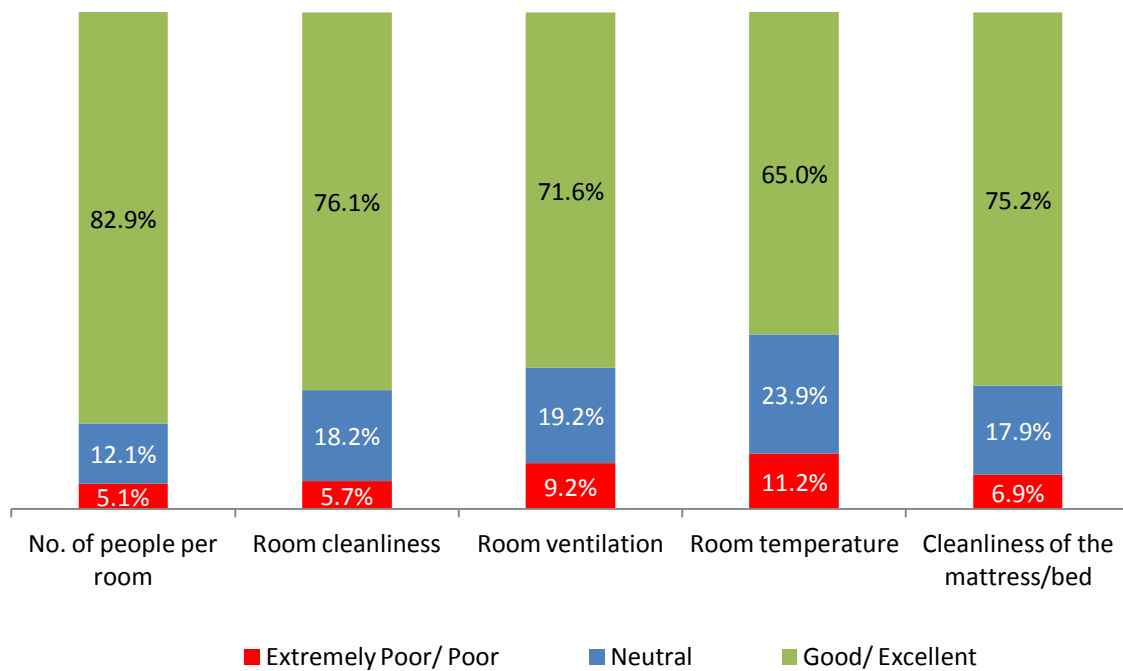
4.11 Housing and Living Conditions⁷

WP holders were generally satisfied with their housing and living conditions

4.11.1 Most WP holders provided good/excellent ratings for the conditions within their rooms, in terms of: (i) the number of people per room (82.9%); (ii) room cleanliness (76.1%); (iii) room ventilation (71.6%); (iv) room temperature (65.0%); and (v) cleanliness of the mattress/bed (75.2%).

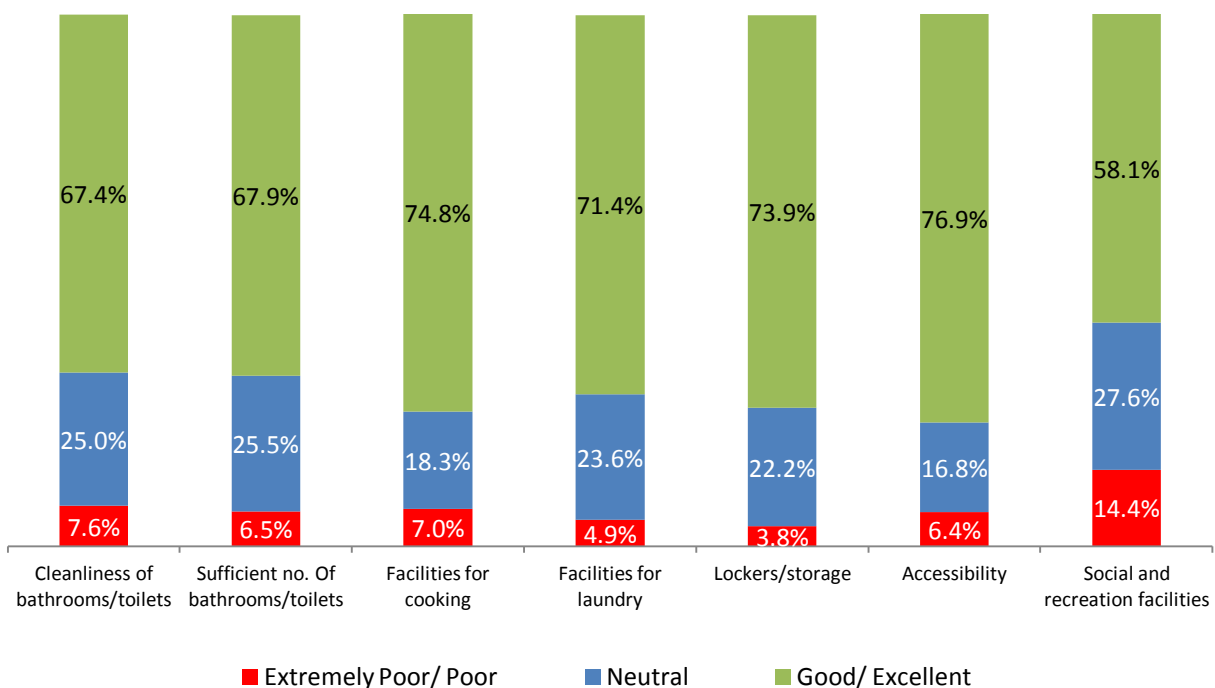
⁷ Under the Employment of Foreign Manpower (Work Passes) Regulations, employers of WP holders are required to ensure that their foreign employees have acceptable accommodation.

Ratings for room conditions



4.11.2 Most WP holders provided good/excellent ratings for the various amenities and conveniences for their housing, in terms of: (i) cleanliness of bathrooms/toilets (67.4%); (ii) sufficient number of bathrooms/toilets (67.9%); (iii) facilities for cooking (74.8%); (iv) facilities for laundry (71.4%); (v) lockers/storage (73.9%); (vi) accessibility (76.9%); and (vii) social and recreation facilities (58.1%).

Ratings for amenities and conveniences



4.12 Remittance

WP holders remitted most of their salaries back to their families; FWs spent a small proportion of their salaries on leisure

4.12.1 WP holders remitted a median proportion of 59% of their salaries back to their families. S Pass holders, on the other hand, remitted a median proportion of 34% of their salaries back to their families.

4.12.2 FWs spent a small proportion of their salaries for leisure (WP holders: 19% and S Pass holders: 15%).

Amount remitted/spent	WP Holders (median %)	S Pass Holders (median %)
How much of your salary do you send/remit home to family?	59%	34%
How much of your salary do you spend on leisure for yourself?	19%	15%

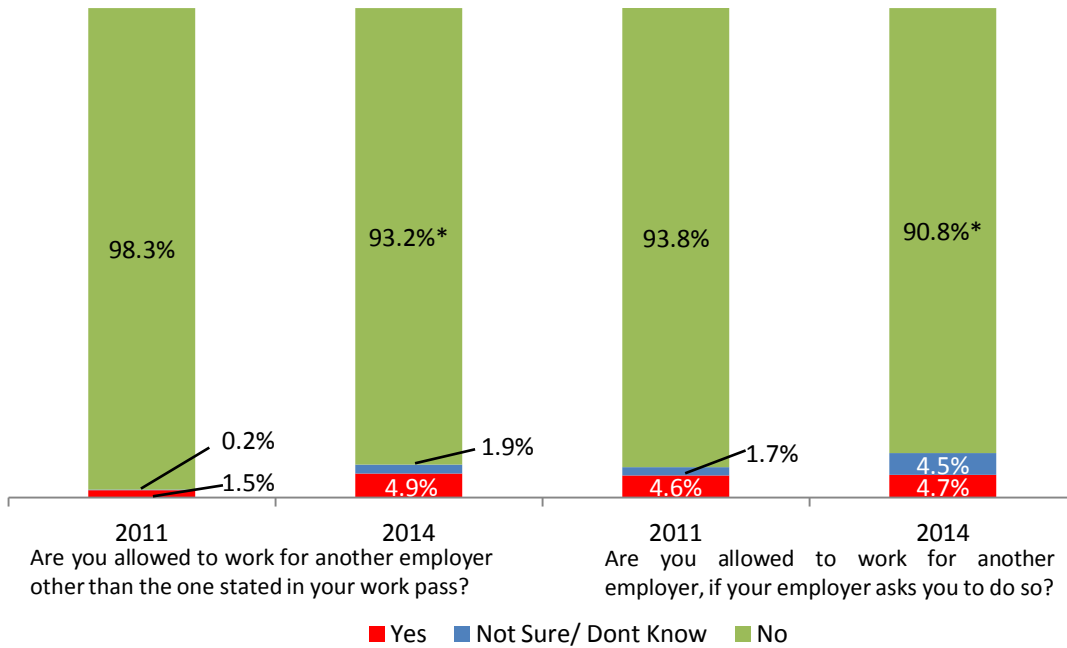
5 Awareness of Employment-Related Responsibilities and Channels of Assistance

5.1 Awareness of Employment-Related Responsibilities

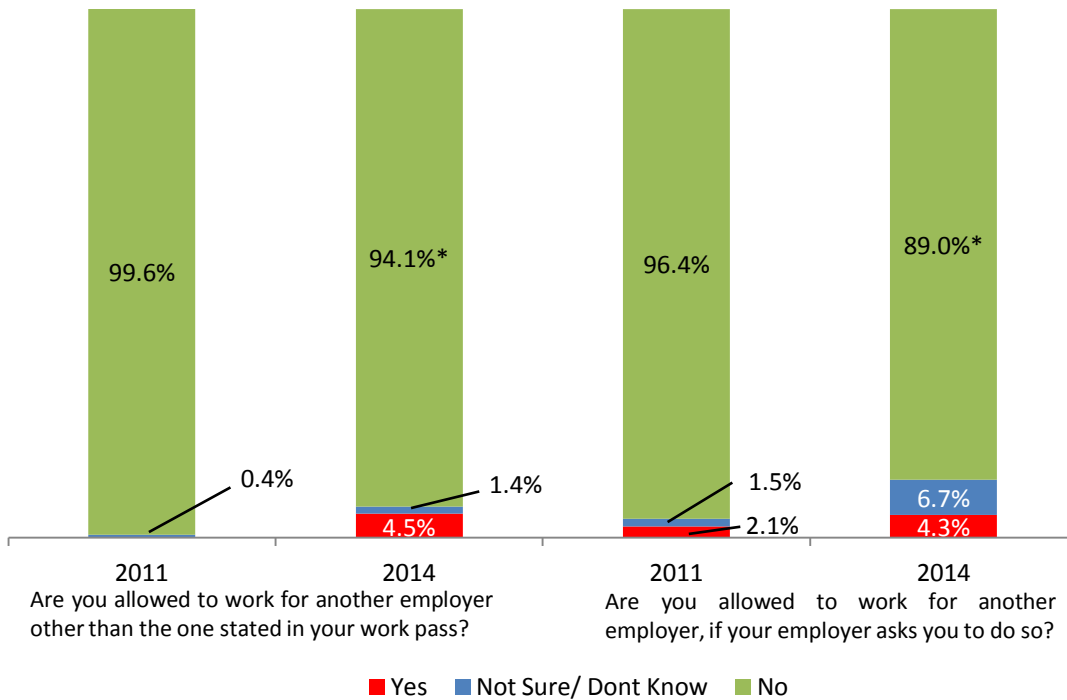
Vast majority of FWs were aware of their employment-related responsibilities

5.1.1 Almost all FWs (WP holders: 93.2% and S Pass holders: 94.1%) were aware that they were not allowed to work for another employer other than the one stated in their work pass. About nine in 10 FWs (WP holders: 90.8% and S Pass holders: 89.0%) were also aware that they were not allowed to work for another employer even if their employer had asked them to do so. This was a statistically significant change compared to 2011.

***Are you allowed to work for another employer other than the one stated in your work pass?
Are you allowed to work for another employer, if your employer had asked you to do so?
(WP Holders)***

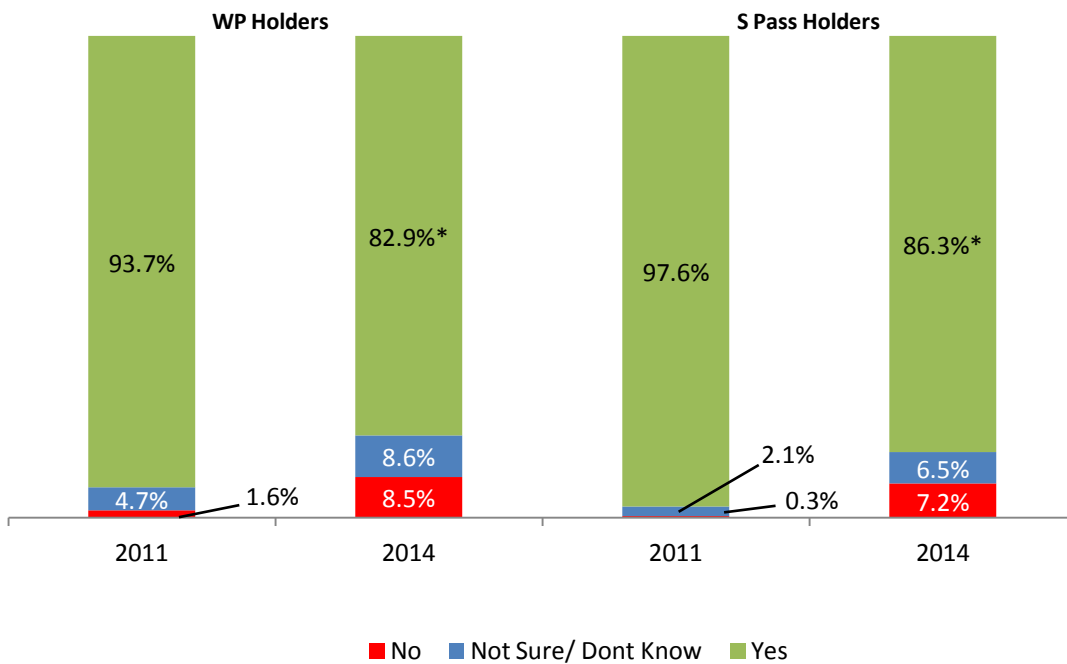


**Are you allowed to work for another employer other than the one stated in your work pass?
Are you allowed to work for another employer, if your employer had asked you to do so?
(S Pass Holders)**



5.1.2 More than eight in 10 FWs (WP holders: 82.9% and S Pass holders: 86.3%) were aware of their entitlement to compensation from their employer in the event of a workplace injury. This was a significant change compared to 2011.

**If you suffer a permanent disability from an accident at work,
can you claim compensation from your employer?**



5.1.3 As was the case in 2011, FWs still remained uncertain about the process to make a work injury compensation claim – more than a third of FWs (WP holders: 42.3% and S Pass holders: 35.5%) had the misconception that they needed to engage a lawyer in order to make a claim.

5.2 Channels of Assistance

FWs preferred to approach their supervisors if they encountered problems

5.2.1 When faced with employment-related problems, majority of FWs would turn to their supervisors (WP holders: 57.3% and S Pass holders: 47.8%) or MOM (WP holder: 25.2% and S Pass holders: 15.5%).

Most preferred person/organisation to approach for help for employment-related problems

Employment-related problems	WP Holders		S Pass Holders	
	2011	2014	2011	2014
Supervisor	43%	57.3%	45%	47.8%
Ministry of Manpower	8%	25.2%	NA	15.5%
Employer	27%	13.6%	20%	28.1%
Co-workers or friends	NA	1.7%	10%	1.5%

NA: Data not available

5.2.2 For information on work-injury compensation claims, majority of FWs would turn to their supervisors (WP holders: 68.0% and S Pass holders: 51.6%) or employers (WP holders: 24.1% and S Pass holders: 35.9%).

Most preferred person/organisation to approach for help for work-injury compensation problems

Work-injury compensation claims	WP Holders		S Pass Holders	
	2011	2014	2011	2014
Supervisor	46%	68.0%	48%	51.6%
Employer	32%	24.1%	27%	35.9%
Ministry of Manpower	3%	4.8%	NA	4.4%
Co-workers or friends	5%	1.3%	12%	0.8%

NA: Data not available

5.3 Perception of MOM

FWs generally believe that MOM is fair and have confidence that MOM will help workers with employment problems

5.3.1 About nine in 10 (89.2%) of WP holders and eight in 10 (82.2%) S Pass holders expressed confidence that MOM was fair and would be able to help them when they faced problems.

I have confidence that MOM is fair and will be able to help me when I face problems with my employer

